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Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2717, NAMBIAR AND LARSEN DISCUSS UNSCR 1701 (AND TERJE DISCUSSES TERJE)

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06BEIRUT2717	2006-08-21 16:23	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Beirut

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIRUT 002717

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2026
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: NAMBIAR AND LARSEN DISCUSS UNSCR 1701 (AND TERJE DISCUSSES TERJE)
REF: A. BEIRUT 2680
[IB.](#) BEIRUT 2698

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) On 8/20, UN envoys Vijay Nambiar and Terje Roed-Larsen briefed the Ambassador on their Lebanon consultations regarding UNSCR 1701. They were impressed with the progress of LAF deployment. Concerned over UNIFIL Commander Pellegrini's comments about inadequate LAF-UNIFIL coordination, they brokered a political-security issue on 8/19, chaired by Prime Minister Siniora, on a range of security issues. (Putting himself generously on the back, Larsen claimed that this meeting, held at his initiative, had revealed information that no one in the international community had known before. We told Terje that we had already reported his so-called breaking news.) They described a "dire need" for equipment, spare parts, and ammunition for the LAF. The UN envoys admitted that they failed in one of their goals, getting Siniora to ask for UNIFIL presence at the seaport and airport. Citing sovereignty concerns, Siniora (as he has with us) deferred a decision pending the visit of German experts this week. On larger issues, Larsen mused about demarcating a "very small" Shebaa Farms. Nambiar (who mostly deferred to Larsen) fumed about the Israeli raid in the Bq'a' that he said put the GOL on the defensive vis-a-vis Hizballah. They did not get verifiable information about the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. Earlier, on 8/18, Larsen met with Ambassador Feltman privately. While spending most of the time at that meeting discussing UN politics (and why Larsen insists he is a viable fall back candidate for SYG), Larsen quoted from Kofi Annan's telephone call with Iranian President Ahmadinejad in expressing fear that Iran was going to "punish" the United States. End summary.

UN ENVOYS IMPRESSED
BY LAF DEPLOYMENT

¶2. (C/NF) Nambier and Roed-Larsen (joined by staffers Lee O'Brien, Imran Riza, Salman Sheikh, and Fabrice Aidan, with Geir Pedersen flitting in and out in cameo appearances) briefed the Ambassador on 8/20, near the end of their Lebanon program and a few hours before flying to Israel. Larsen, who took the lead in the briefing, touched briefly on individual meetings but focused largely on themes. On LAF deployment, Larsen said, while Nambier nodded, that the UN envoys had discovered that the deployment was "more serious than any of us knew." They noted that, while Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Murr had initially exaggerated numbers of troops and equipment to impress the UN, even the actual figures confirmed later by the Lebanese military representatives and UNIFIL were impressive and indicated GOL seriousness regarding UNSCR 1701 implementation. What came out in all of their meetings, Larsen said, is that the LAF has a "dire need" for equipment, spare parts, and ammunition.

IDF-UNIFIL-LAF COORDINATION GOOD,
BUT UNIFIL-LAF PARTNERSHIP LACKING

¶3. (C/NF) Larsen noted that, in his private meeting with the UN envoys, UNIFIL Commander Alain Pellegrini had given them a mixed message. On the positive side, Pellegrini expressed satisfaction with the LAF-UNIFIL-IDF coordination regarding troop movements in southern Lebanon. Also, Pellegrini basically praised the LAF's forward movement into the south. But Pellegrini complained about what he described to as an overly secretive LAF command structure. The LAF, Pellegrini told Larsen and Nambiar, seems to see a relationship with UNIFIL not as one of partners but rather as one by which UNIFIL provides fuel, supplies, and spare parts to the LAF. UNIFIL wants to be much better informed about LAF thinking on coping with threats, force protection, etc.

UN BROKERS SECURITY MEETING
CHAIRRED BY PM

¶4. (C/NF) This comment, Larsen said, sparked a UN-brokered meeting late on 8/19, chaired by Siniora, that included, besides the UN envoys, Defense Minister Murr, Acting Interior Minister Fatfat, LAF Commander Michel Sleiman, Military Intelligence (G-2) chief Georges Khoury, ISF (national police) chief Ashraf Rifi, Pellegrini, and others. Discussion on UNIFIL-LAF cooperation -- the ostensible purpose of the meeting -- was cut off when Pellegrini contradicted his earlier, private comments by praising the LAF's cooperation with UNIFIL. ("Pellegrini was star struck by seeing all those people looking at him," Larsen claimed; "he completely undermined one of the major purposes of the meeting.")

¶5. (C/NF) So instead of focusing on improving UNIFIL-LAF coordination, the PM-chaired session moved quickly to the second topic, the GOL's obligations under UNSCR 1701. Larsen marveled to the Ambassador that he and Nambiar had received information regarding changes in airport security and deployment of Lebanese troops to the Syrian border that no one in the international community would have known, had Larsen not thought to convene the security meeting. "This is big news," Larsen said, melodramatically. He brandished maps, with hand-written notes of troop numbers, and described the replacement by LAF officers at the airport with the ISF. The Ambassador noted that we had passed that information to Washington already (reftels) but we were still evaluating the seriousness of it. Larsen argued that, in any case, no one could deny that the GOL was taking steps toward meetings its obligations under UNSCR 1701.

¶6. (C/NF) Looking to trump the Ambassador, Larsen said that something new came out of the meeting: Siniora, Murr and Sleiman agreed that UNIFIL could travel freely to the Syrian border to verify the deployment trumpeted by the GOL. The Ambassador asked if UNIFIL would be able to stop and examine the deployment and what the LAF troops were doing. "My understanding is that it's more like a road reconnaissance," Nambiar interjected. Also, Larsen said, the same group that gathered on Saturday night would meet at least once a week, including with the PM, under UN auspices (with both Pellegrini and Geir Pedersen present), to work out other issues. "This is a good sign."

NO REQUEST TO UNIFIL
TO HELP AT BORDERS

¶7. (C/NF) The Ambassador asked about Lebanon's 1701 obligations to combat arms smuggling. Had Larsen and Nambiar managed to extract a request from Siniora to get a UNIFIL presence at the airport and seaports? Larsen acknowledged that they had pushed this topic hard, but that Siniora repeated his usual infringement-of-sovereignty concerns. Siniora seemed interested in technical solutions to border issues, and he said that he would listen carefully to what the German team of experts would recommend this week. Larsen agreed with the Ambassador that Siniora's answers have not been satisfactory on this point.

LEBANESE EMPHASIZE
ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

¶8. (C/NF) Moving to the broader issues, Larsen said that he was struck by the importance the Lebanese place on the 1949 Armistice Agreement, a framework that the Lebanese find reassuring and that "allows them to be creative." Aware that the Israelis see no relevance to the Armistice Agreement, Larsen said that he would nevertheless explore with the GOI whether there might be some way to make creative reference to it.

USING PROPERTY DEEDS TO DEFINE
DIMINUTIVE SHEBAAS FARMS

¶9. (C/NF) Not surprising, all the Lebanese interlocutors -- including the pro-Syrian relics (Omar Karami et al.) the UN envoys choose to meet to show "balance" -- emphasized the need to "solve" Shebaa Farms as the key to Hizballah disarmament. Larsen gave a long briefing of familiar arguments. He said that he now believes that the only way to demarcate the border is to use private property deeds, as maps simply aren't clear or don't support the Lebanese claims in the Shebaa area. By examining where private property was registered (e.g., Lebanon or Syria), Larsen predicted that UN cartographers would end up with a "very small" Shebaa Farms. This is because much of what is claimed to be Shebaa Farms was actually state land, never properly documented, and the maps in those areas support Syrian sovereignty. Larsen said the trick will be to convince the Lebanese to accept a modest-sized Shebaa Farms as ending the dispute once and for all -- if Israel could be persuaded to give up that modest-sized Shebaa Farms in the first place.

¶10. (C/NF) The Ambassador asked about Ghajjar village, which Larsen acknowledged no Lebanese claims. But, yes, Larsen admitted, even under a "tiny Shebaa" solution, Ghajjar would end up as a salient, a finger surrounded on three sides by Lebanon, which could give the Israeli military great pause. The Ambassador also asked Larsen whether, if the UN started noting when private property was registered by Lebanese authorities, the UN would also be looking into Syrian-registered property deeds, to be able to tell where Lebanon's authorities stopped and Syria's started -- and to note any overlap. "Interesting question," Larsen said. "And it gives us another opportunity to corner Syria, show a lack of cooperation." Larsen closed the Shebaa discussion by saying that he planned to have a frank discussion with the Israelis on the issue, even though he did not expect much receptivity.

BIIQA' RAID PROVIDES HIZBALLAH ADDITIONAL EXCUSE FOR WEAPONS

¶11. (C/NF) Nambiar asked the Ambassador his view of the 8/19 early morning Israeli raid in the Biqa'. The Ambassador said that he knew only what he had read in the press and what the Lebanese had told him in multiple, middle-of-the-night, frantic and angry phonecalls. Nambiar, suddenly animated (while Larsen studiously maintained a politically correct silence on this topic), said that the Israelis had almost succeeded in destroying the cessation of hostilities. Based on everything he had heard, Nambiar expressed concern that the Israelis had undermined the Siniora government. By declaring that they would kill Hizballah officials wherever they could find them, the Israelis had given Hizballah the perfect excuse to refuse to disarm. "Who else will protect them?" Moreover, the Israeli action in the Biqa' would only serve to discourage troop contributors to UNIFIL. Particularly egregious, Nambiar said, was the fact that, according to the Lebanese, the Israelis had come dressed in LAF uniforms, thus making Hizballah suspicious of the LAF. The Ambassador repeated that it is important for the GOL to take action against arms smuggling, lest Israel continue to do so.

NO NEWS ON KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS

¶12. (C/NF) The Ambassador asked Nambiar and Larsen whether they had found out anything about the two kidnapped Israeli soldiers. They said that the ICRC told them of reports that the Israelis were being "humanely treated." The ICRC had no independent verification of that. But the ICRC told the UN envoys that, generally, such reports turn out to be fairly accurate. Larsen admitted that the ICRC statements were "not much."

EARLIER DINNER WITH TERJE -- WORRIED ABOUT IRAN, OBSESSED WITH UN TRANSITION

¶13. (S/NF) The Ambassador also had a late night, private dinner with Larsen two days earlier, just after Larsen's arrival on 8/18. While much of the dinner revolved around Larsen's proposed messages to the Lebanese (with the Ambassador urging Larsen to push Siniora to request UNIFIL help for border monitoring), Larsen -- please protect -- also talked of "a terribly frightening" conversation between Kofi Annan and Iranian President Ahmadinejad, when Annan urged compliance with UNSCR 1701. The Iranian, Larsen said (quoting from a transcript of the conversation), spoke of "punishing" the U.S. and UK. "He's crazy, and he's going to attack you," Larsen said. Larsen then launched into a long discussion of "38th floor politics" at the UN, while suggesting that none of the names being circulated as Kofi Annan's successor are acceptable. That means, Larsen concluded, that he could still very much become the fall-back candidate. And if Prince Zaid of Jordan becomes the front-runner, then the U.S. should demand that Prince Zaid "have a ticket," with -- you guessed it, readers -- Larsen as Deputy SYG.

COMMENT

¶14. (C/NF) The UN envoys have had no more luck than we have in convincing Siniora to ask for UNIFIL help at the borders, including airport and seaports. Since the continued blockade of the air and seaports does not seem to be sufficient to get Siniora to ask, we have tried to use the Israeli raid in the Biqa' to strengthen our argument in favor of such a request: as long as Lebanon doesn't get international help at its borders, then Israel will continue to take matters into its own hands. But most people tell us that the raid has made it harder, not easier, for Siniora to refute the charge that he is complicit in a scheme to allow the international community to infringe upon Lebanon's sovereignty by intrusive, foreign-imposed border procedures. In short, we aren't there yet on the UNIFIL request.

FELTMAN